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ABSTRACT

The development of critical ethnography in education is traced, and the central epistemological and methodological issues in the practice of critical ethnography are discussed. Some of the directions the field appears to be taking are considered. Critical ethnography in education began in the late 1960's and early 1970's, with roots in the interpretist movements of anthropology and sociology. By the early 1980's, ethnographic methods and critical theory and critical feminism were well-entrenched among a small segment of American educational researchers. Subfields in which critical ethnography has been used include: (1) student subcultures; (2) curriculum; (3) administration and policy; (4) teacher education; (5) comparative education; (6) gender; and (7) vocational education. A major issue in critical ethnography is that of validity, which is explored in an analysis of the relationships of theory to data and knowledge to ideology. The issue of reflexivity is at the heart of any discussion of ethnographic method. Critical ethnography is in its infancy as a genre of social analysis. New directions that the field appears to be taking include: (1) historicity and locus of analysis; (2) "critical linguistics" and the ethnography of communication; and (3) the study of progressive outliers and collaborative action research. Although there is a growing body of epistemological and methodological analysis in works concerning critical ethnography, there is yet little practical advice. A 123-item list of references is included. (SLD)

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CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY IN EDUCATION: ORIGINS, CURRENT STATUS, AND NEW DIRECTIONS.

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> ..."participant observation, and the methods under its aegis, display a tendency towards naturalism and therefore to conservatism....Still we cannot invent a form out of its time....The ethnographic account, for all its faults, records a critical level of experience and through its very biases insists on a level of human agency which is persistently overlooked or denied..."(Willis, 1977, p. 194)

A reassessment of dominant ideas and methodologies is currently underway in the social sciences. Geertz's (1983) phrase "blurred genres" has characterized the fluid borrowing that has occurred across disciplines. The political and intellectual ferment of the 1960's challenged the grand theories and methodological orthodoxy of a previous generation. In sociology the Parsonian notions of function and system equilibrium have been viewed by many as too ahistorical and apolitical to do justice to the richness and diversity of social life. In anthropology, analysis shifted away from taxonomic descriptions of behavior and social structure toward thick descriptions and interpretations of symbol and meaning. And everywhere research methods tied to the assumptions of a positivism borrowed from the natural sciences are increasingly viewed as incapable of providing conceptually sophisticated accounts of social reality.

In most accounts by historians of science, a new paradigm challenges the dominant paradigm in the field. What characterizes the present postpositivist world of the social sciences is a continued attack on positivism with no clearly worked out alternative. Within disciplines and fields generally, broad paradigms and grand theories are increasingly found lacking in their ability to provide guidance in asking and answering persistent and seemingly intractable social questions. In periods when grand theories are in disarray, attention turns to epistemological issues and modes of representation. According to Marcus & Fischer (1986), "the most interesting theoretical debates in a number of fields have shifted from the level of substantive theoretical issues to the level of method, to problems of epistemology, interpretation, and discursive forms of representation themselves" (p. 9). Thus, the current situation though chaotic, is also full of opportunity. Current theoretical and methodological dissatisfaction has led to a resurgence of interest in intellectual traditions such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism and Marxism. Critical ethnography as a form of represention and interpretation of social reality is one of the many methodological experiments that have grown out of the ferment.

This paper will trace the development of critical ethnography in the field of education, discuss the central epistemological and methodological issues that the practice of

critical ethnography has raised, and describe some of the directions it appears to be taking.

Critical Ethnography and Education

In the field of education, critical ethnography is the result of the convergence of two largely independent trends in epistemology and social theory. The epistemological movement was the result of a shift in research paradigms within the field of education which reflected an attempt to "break out of the conceptual cul-de-sac of quantitative methods" (Rist, 1980, p. 8) Of all the qualitative research traditions available, ethnography has most captured the imagination of researchers in the field of education (Atkinson, Delamont, & Hammersley, 1988; Jacob, 1987, Wolcott, 1985) Although ethnographies of schooling have been done by a small group of anthropologists for some time, the ethnography "movement" began in the field of education during the late 1960's and early 1970's. The works of Cusick (1973), Henry (1963), Jackson (1968), Ogbu (1974), Rist (1973), Smith & Geoffrey (1968), Smith & Keith (1971), Wolcott (1973), and others provided examples of the genre that others would later emulate.

Critical ethnography owes a great debt to interpretive movements in the fields of anthropology and sociology. Influenced by phenomenology, structuralism, semiotics, hermeneutics, and linguistics, interpretive ethnographers in

anthropology raised fundamental questions about both the practice of ethnography and the nature of culture. Tracing their lineage to Malinowski's (1922) concern with "the native's point of view", they engaged in discussions of the nature of "local knowledge" and viewed social life as consisting of negotiated meanings (Geertz, 1973, 1983). While interpretivists in anthropology were shifting their attention from the functionalist notions of systems maintenance and equilibrium to what Geertz (1983) calls "the analysis of symbol systems" (p. 34), qualitative sociologists were mounting an epistemological attack on the pervasiveness of positivist assumptions in their field. In sociology the traditions of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology provided legitimation for ethnographic methods. Both interactionists and ethnomethodologists were concerned with social interaction as a means of negotiating meanings in context. The result of the interpretivist movements in both disciplines was to highlight the importance of symbolic action and "to place human actors and and their interpretive and negotiating capacities at the centre of analysis" (Angus, 1986a, p. 61)

At the same time that the ethnography "movement" was beginning in education, "Neo-Marxist" and feminist social theorists in other disciplines were producing works that soon would make their way into American educational discourse. (Althusser, 1971; Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Braverman, 1974; Chodorow, 1978; de Beauvoir, 1953; Foucault, 1972; Freire, 1970; Genovese, 1970; Giddens, 1976; Gramsci, 1971

(appearance in English of selected works); Habermas, 1975; Horkheimer, 1972; Jameson, 1971; Lacan, 1977; Lukacs, 1971; Marcuse, 1964; Millet, 1970; Oakley, 1972; Poulantzas, 1975; Williams, 1961;). This "critical" thrust would raise serious questions about the role of schools in the social and cultural reproduction of social classes, gender roles, and racial and ethnic prejudice.

The interpretivist's focus on human agency and local knowledge appealed greatly to many neo-Marxists and feminists who were trapped in the theoretical cul-du-sac of overdeterminism. Analyses of economic and patriarchal determinism were increasingly viewed as inadequate social explanations for persistent social class, race and gender inequities. Bowles & Gintis' (1977) impressive structuralist account of the role of American schooling in social reproduction and the theoretical and epistemological critique which followed it (Cohen & Rosenberg, 1977) accelerated the search for representations of social reality capable of providing social explanations sensitive to the interaction between human agency and social structure. The British "new sociology" had already produced several prototypes for a dialectical representation of social structure and human agency. (McRobbie & Garber, 1975; Sharp and Green, 1975; Willis, 1977) Orthodox Marxist notions of false consciousness and ecomonic determinism had also long been under attack by the Frankfort School critical theorists, but the methodological implications of their critique were generally left unclear.

Willis (1977) describes how ethnography provides a methodological vehicle for theoretical advances in Marxism.

> The ethnographic account, without always knowing how, can allow a degree of the activity, creativity and human agency within the object of study to come through into the analysis and the reader's experience. This is vital to my purposes where I view the cultural, not simply as a set of transferred internal structures (as in the usual notions of socialization) nor as the passive result of the action of dominant ideology downwards (as in certain kinds of Marxism), but at least in part as the product of collective human praxis (pp. 3-4).

Thus, ethnography allowed Willis to view the working class adolescents who were his cultural informants not as merely victims of "false consciousness", but as rational social actors who understood or "penetrated" the structural constraints on their social class, but who nevertheless through their very refusal to play a "fixed" game, adopted the attitudes that condemned them to a life of factory labor. This emphasis on human "agency" or "praxis" is echoed by critical feminists:

> Insofar as a deterministic emphasis served to underscore the larger structural facticity of women s oppression by demonstrating how women's personalities, ambitions, attitudes, behaviors and role acquisitions are products of patriarchal culture and patriarchal institutions, it was extremely significant. Nonetheless, it is now time to move beyond such models to explore more critically the relationship between macrostructural conditions and the immediate, concrete realities which women and men create and share, albeit differentially....A critical feminism will attempt to overcome the aforementioned inadequacies of gender-role research in two primary ways. Metatheoretically, it will seek to eliminate assumptions of a micro-macro dualism in its analysis of social arrangements and social life by focusing analysis upon the interpenetration of structure and consciousness in the

> situations and relationships of everyday life. Epistemologically and methodologically, it will replace the positivistic methods of conventional sociology with those of a critical ethnography which attempts...to probe the lived-realities of human actors and the conditions informing both the construction and possible transformation of these realities (DiIorio, 1982, pp. 22-3).

As the decade of the 1980's began, ethnographic methods, as well as, critical theory and critical feminism were well entrenched among a small segment of American educational researchers. Their marriage to many seemed, at once, both an epistemological contradiction and an inevitability.

Although still in its infancy, critical ethnography has been used during the 1980's in a number of educational subfields. Although the list below is not exhaustive and includes only critical ethnographies written in English, it represents the outline of a research program which explores schools as sites of social and cultural reproduction mediated through human agency by various forms of resistance and accommodation.

Student subcultures: Aggleton, 1987; Aggleton & Whitty, 1985; Brah & Minhas, 1985; Connell et al., 1982; Fine, 1986; Jenkins, 1983; McLaren, 1986: McLeod, 1986; Ogbu, 1983; Weis, 1985; Willis, 1977.

Curriculum: Anyon, 1980; Bennett & Sola, 1985; Everhart, 1983; Oakes, 1985; Sharp & Green, 1975.

Administration and policy: Anderson, 1988, 1989; Angus, 1986b; Everhart, 1985.

Teacher Education: Bullough, Gitlin & Goldstein, 1984; Ginsburg & Newman, 1985; Goodman, 1985; Kanpol, 1988.

Comparative Education: Wexler, 1979.

Gender: Amos & Parmar, 1981; Eder & Parker, 1987; McRobbie & Garber, 1976; McRobbie, 1978; Smith, 1987; Weiler, 1988; Wilson, 1978.

Vocational Education: Simon, 1983; Valli, 1986.

Critical Ethnography and the Issue of Validity

Educational researchers using qualitative methods have over the years had to work hard to legitimate their methods to the educational research establishment. The longstanding practice of ethnography in anthropology has provided many educational researchers with a legitimate methodological tradition. Ironically, however, while anthropologists have been moving in the direction of experimenation with more "literary" approaches to ethnography (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), educational researchers have been moving to systematize ethnographic research in an attempt to make it more scientific (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). The elaborate data analysis procedures of ethnographic semantics

(Spradley, 1979, 1980) and microethnography (Green & Wallet, 1981) have been particularly popular in education since such procedures provide a record of the decion-making process that produced the final analysis. These procedures lend legitimacy to their work and an air of validity to their findings and protect educational ethnographers from accusations of mere "story-telling".

Critical ethnographers are in a double bind. They are often viewed with skepticism not only by the educational research establishment, but also by fellow ethnographers who have taken great care to build procedures for "objectivity" into their work (See critique of Willis (1977) by Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) Critical ethnography is, after all, what Lather (1986a) calls "openly ideological research". The apparent contradiction of such value-based research with traditional definitions of validity leaves critical ethnography open to criticism from both within and without the ethnographic tradition.

Of course, critical ethnographers engage in standard practices associated with the validity of ethnographic research such as triangulation of data sources and methods and member checking. Nevertheless, their agenda of social critique, their attempt to locate their respondents' meanings in larger impersonal systems of political economy, and the resulting conceptual "front-endedness" of much of their research raises validity issues beyond those of mainstream naturalistic research. The following discussion addresses these validity issues by

briefly exploring several key relationships of concern to critical ethnographers: the relationship between theory and data, between knowledge and ideology, and between the researcher and the researched. No attempt has been made to provide a complete analysis of these issues. For a more complete discussion see Angus (1986a), Comstock (1982), Lather (1986a, 1986b), Masemann (1982), Reynolds (1980-81), Simon & Dippo (1986), Thomas (1983), and West (1984).

Validity represents a problem for critical ethnographers because of the emancipatory goal of critical research. Interpretivist researchers aim to generate insights, to explain events, and to seek understanding. Critical ethnographers have these same interpretivist aims, but with the ultimate goal of freeing individuals from sources of domination and repression. Critical ethnographers then serve the interests of those they view as victims of exploitation, alienation, and arbitrary forms of authority (Schroyer, 1970) and believe that interest-free knowledge is logically impossible. They argue that the concepts of "objectivity" and "neutrality" in positivistic and most naturalistic research often tend to legitimate ideology by treating it as objective knowledge. This controversy will be explored below through an analysis of the relationships of theory to data and knowledge to ideology in critical ethnography.

Theory and data. Because of their emancipatory goals, critical ethnographers are often viewed as excessively "theory-driven".

They have been accused of manipulating their data in the service of pre-formed theories (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). They tend to respond to this accusation by pointing out the close dialectical relationship between theory and data,

> "If the cannons of critical research are to be taken seriously, there is no sensible distinction between theory and data - for the generation of data through observation and participation involves selection and interpretation that must reflect judgements that are theoretically based." (Angus, 1986a, p.65)

According to critical ethnographers, not only do decisions during collection and interpretation of data saturate it with the researchers theoretical assumptions, but the informants' perceptions of social reality are themselves theoretical constructs. That is, although the informant's constructs are, to use Geertz (1973) expression, more "experience-near" than the researcher's, they are, themselves, re-constructions of social reality. In spite of this refusal to elevate the informant's common sense perceptions of social reality over the researcher's constructs, most critical ethnographers would agree that the informant's definition of situation is a better starting point for analysis than the pet theories of the researcher (See the Ramsay (1983) - Anyon (1985) exchange regarding this issue).

Interpretivists would have no quarrel with this view of theory and data so far, but critical ethnographers go a step further in claiming that informant re-constructions are often permeated with meanings that sustain powerlessness. They further argue that people's conscious models exist to perpetuate, not to

explain, social phenomenon. This view is not limited to social actors but is also applied to social science constructs. Analytic categories commonly used to build theory in sociology and anthropology, categories like "family", "property", "stratification" "political", "economic", etc. "can be seen not as concepts designed for the analytic description of what surrounds us, but as concepts which are themselves part of that process which is the reproduction of our own social form" (Barnett & Silverman, 1979, p.13).

Knowledge and Ideology. Barnett & Silverman (1979) claim that analytic categories that are not viewed wholistically become ideological in that they lead to the reproduction of a particular set of social relationships.

> "In order to deal critically with our categories of analysis, we must have an analysis of them: an analysis which, if it does not relate them to a world larger than those categories, can be accused of merely participating in the reproduction of this social form" (Barnett & Silverman, 1979, P. 13).

Thus critical ethnographers in education do not take such categories as "giftedness", "drop outs", "management", "public relations", "effective" schools or even "education" at face value. Rather, by placing them in a more wholistic social context, they are able to highlight their ideological aspects and the interests that benefit from the maintenance of current definitions.

For critical ethnographers wholism involves more than simply documenting those outside forces and macro-structural elements that impinge on the local cultural unit under analysis. A critical wholism recognizes that,

> "the 'outside forces' are an integral part of the construction and constitution of the 'inside', the cultural unit itself, and must be so registered, even at the most intimate levels of cultural process..." (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 77)

For the critical ethnographer the cultural construction of meaning is inherently a matter of political and economic interests. According to critical ethnographers it is in the embededness of commonsense knowledge (and social science knowledge as well) in political and economic interests that the ideological nature of knowledge resides.

Some critical researchers go so far as to argue that the enterprise of science itself is best seen as a socially constructed discourse that legitimates its power by presenting itself as truth (Aronowitz, 1988; Knorr-Cetina & Mulkey, 1983) The epistemological consequences of such a view are provided by Thompson (1984).

> Hence the epistemological problems raised by the analysis of ideology cannot be resolved by a presumptuous appeal to science, including the 'science' of historical materialism. It is my view that one can progress with these problems only if one is prepared to engage in a reflection of a genuinely epistemological sort, a reflection which is attuned to the question of critique and guided by the concept of truth (p. 140).

In the light of the close theory/data and knowledge/ideology relationships and the inability of "correct" scientific methods to guarantee "true" research outcomes, the kind of reflection Thompson refers to becomes a key criteria of validity in critical ethnography.

Reflexivity. For critical ethnographers the locus of validity in research is neither the research technology and the "objective" distance it provides nor the cultural informant's meanings. Extreme experience-near and experience-distant positions are eschewed for interpretations capable of exploring the dialectic relationship between social structure and human agency.

Reflexivity in ethnographic research is not new. In fact, unless ethnography is viewed as mere naturalistic description, the issue of reflexivity is at the center of any discussion of ethnographic method. Most discussions of reflexivity include reflection on the relationship between theory and data (Glaser & Strauss) and the effects of the researcher's presence on the data collected (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Lincoln & Guba). The critical ethnographer additionally attempts to integrate and systematize two other forms of reflection - self-reflection, ie. reflection on the researcher's biases, and reflection on the dialectical relationship between structural and historical forces and human agency. Reflexivity in critical ethnography then involves a dialectical process among five areas: 1. the researcher's constructs, 2. the informants' commonsense

constructs, 3. the research data, 4. the researcher's personal biases, and 5. the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study.

Some progress has been made in exploring methods that promote the kind of reflexivity required of the critical ethnographer. Collaborative and action research methods (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Carr & Kemmis, 1983) and the negotiation of research outcomes between the researcher and the researched (Anderson & Kelley, 1987; Kushner & Norris, 1980-81) provide a start in the systemization of reflexivity among researchers and their informants. Self-reflexivity has traditionally been encouraged through the addition of "personal notes" in field notebooks and the use of reflexive journals (Lincoln & Guba, 1984) However, the potential of systematic self-reflexivity in critical research has yet to be explored in depth (Reinhartz, 1983). Successful methods that incorporate structural and historical forces in reality construction at the micro level have yet to be described in any detail. Perhaps the most promising methods are those that seek the manifestations of power and domination in the hidden "deep structures" of social reality (Clegg, 1979; Giddens, 1979; Lukes, 1974). Lather (1986b) sums up the tension that a value- and theory-driven critical ethnography must resolve.

> Building empirically grounded theory requires a reciprocal relationship between data and theory. Data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori

theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured. (p. 267)

Criticisms and New Directions

The purpose of the following section is not so much to reveal the shortcomings of critical ethnography as to indicate directions critical ethnographers appear to be taking and to suggest new directions. Ironically, despite critical ethnography's commitment to wholistic social analysis, its accounts have been criticised for existing outside the flow of history and for neglecting microethnographic analysis of social discourse (Wexler, 1987). Because critical ethnography is still in its infancy as a genre of social analysis such uneven growth should not be surprising.

Historicity and Locus of Analysis

Wexler (1987) sees a major shift in U.S. social institutions that critical ethnography, as it is currently practiced, is unable to capture. He argues that critical ethnographic accounts fail to focus on broad social transformations (e.g., post-industrialism and

post-structuralism) and social movements, as well as, "historically specific 'local' institutional reorganizations" (p. 12). According to Wexler this is, in part, because of a division of labor that has developed among academics who are increasingly specialized and compartmentalized across, as well as within, fields and disciplines. It is also, in part, a result of the lack of a sense of historicity capable of analyzing broad shifts in social institutions. Critical ethnography, Wexler argues, is ahistorical in that its preoccupation with education's role in social and cultural reproduction keeps it from analyzing much greater and broader changes in social and cultural forms.

Similarly, Wexler (1987) argues that the locus of analysis of critical ethnography is too site-specific. In spite of its claim to wholism and its reliance on abstract social theories and categories such as "class" and "state", critical ethnography "languishes within the school institution, outside of social history" leading to the "omission of politically interested social analyses of the infrastructure of education and of its social institutional dynamics" (Wexler, 1987, p. 55). Thus, critical ethnographers are accused of ignoring "questions of finance, political regulation, governance, organizational dynamics, and specific historical, inter-institutional relations" (Wexler, 1987, p.55).

Wexler sees this as more that simply a "levels of analysis" issue. Schools, he believes, are no longer the primary educational institutions and, therefore, no longer the primary locus of analysis. Rather at this historical juncture

> the relation between mass discourse and individual formation and motivation is the emergent educational relation. Where the forces of production become informational/communicational, semiotic, and the formation of the subject occurs significantly through mass discourse, then it is that relation which is the educational one. The mass communications/individual relation now already better exemplifies the educational relation than does the school, which as we know it, with all its structural imitations of industrial and, later, corporate productive organization, is being surpassed, as new modes of education develop (Wexler, 1987, p. 174).

Although he makes a general case for the increased application of methods of literary criticism to education-as text, he offers a more specific methodological tool that might help to alleviate the historicity problem: the increased use of life history methods. According to Wexler,

> The practice of oral history counters the elite assumption of the unreflected silence of ordinary people and makes their self-representing expressions authoritative. Where traditional history plays a role in social legitimation, the life history movement works to disperse authority.... Life history research offers as a model of social relations in education not system reproduction and resistance, but hermeneutic conversation. As research, it refuses to separate research and practice. It aims to amplify the capacity for intentional and historical memory (p. 95).

Not only is oral history offering a challenge "to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritative judgement inherent in its tradition" (Thompson, 1978), but it also represents a longstanding methodological tradition in the field of anthropology. With few exceptions (see Wolcott, 1987), life history methods have been ignored by critical ethnographers.

Other attempts to contextualize data and empower informant understandings can be found in the use of informant "accounts" (Gilbert & Abell, 1983) and "narratives" (Mischler, 1986). Mischler describes critical research as involving "critical reflection on the assumptions underlying one's methods and research practices within a commitment to humane values" (p. 142). For example, in his research on the doctor/patient relationship his particular intent was to critique the medical field's biomedical model and, by emphasizing the patient's perspective, to promote a more humane clinical practice. Mischler believes that most current research methods do not give voice to the concerns of social actors and the ways they construct meaning. With regard to research interviewing, he argues that researchers have tended to code the responses of informants as if they existed independent of the contexts that produced them, and that instead of viewing the stories that respondents tell about their experience as digressions from the topic at hand, the researcher should, in fact, illicit such stories with the intent of submitting them to close narrative

analysis in much the same way that a literary critic might approach a text.

> The effort to empower respondents and the study of their responses as narratives are closely linked. They are connected through the assumption...that one of the significant ways through which individuals make sense of and give meaning to their experiences is to organize them in a narrative form. As we shall see, various attempts to restructure the interviewee-interviewer relationship so as to empower respondents are designed to encourage them to find and speak in their own "voices" (Mischler, 1986, p. 118).

Mischler goes on to cite several examples of studies in which respondents such as battered women, college students, and flood victims were encouraged to become more active participants in discourse with researchers, and further suggests a link to social action.

> There is, however, an additional implication of empowerment. Through their narratives people may be moved beyond the text to the possibilities of action. That is, to be empowered is not only to speak in one's own voice and to tell one's own story, but to apply the understanding arrived at to action in accord with one's own interests (p. 119).

Another attempt to empower the voice of informants and restore its historicity can be found in the work of Soviet literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin. Quantz & O'Connor (1988) argue cogently that through the concepts of "dialogue" and "multivoicedness" Bakhtin provides a framework for examining cultural continuity and change. According to Quantz & O'Connor,

> His (Bakhtin's) ideas show us that culture should be seen as a collection of historical events laden with a range of possibilities and shaped by the power

> resources of the individuals present...In trying to understand human behavior, we must be cognizant that some voices are legitimated by the community and, therefore, vocalized, while others are nonlegitimated and therefore, unspoken...Thus, the multiple voices within the individual and within the community struggle to control the direction of the acceptable dialogue, ideological expressions may be reinforced, reinterpreted, or rejected....By recognizing and recording the multiple voices occurring within communities, we should be able to analyze the specific factors which affect the formation in historical situations of legitimated collusions and subsequent social actions (pp. 98-99).

What makes the concepts of multivoicedness and legitimated and nonlegitimated voice so powerful is Bakhtin's view that inward speech which becomes outwardly vocalized is probably that which is most compatible with the socially organized ideology. Multiple voices within the individual and within the community are in a constant struggle for legitimacy. Thus, neither a unified individual nor a consensual society is possible since both inward and outward speech is dialogical and social. Wexler's appeal to life history method may, in fact, represent a means of access to the informant's inner dialogue.

"Critical Linguistics" and The Ethnography of Communication

Although techniques of ethnomethodology and discourse analysis as a critique of ideology have been used extensively by critical feminists (Harding, 1987; Smith, 1987) and other social theorists (Fowler & Kress, 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979; Habermas, 1970) there has been little evidence in practice of a recognition

by critical ethnographers in education that language is a social phenomenon which is enmeshed in relations of power and processes of social change. This may be in part because critical ethnographers have tended to favor macro-analysis, insisting that the lack of a wholistic approach to ethnography by micro-ethnographers renders them incapable of revealing the broader social forces that inform the lives of social actors in specific social settings. They have further criticized micro-ethnography for its tendency "to direct the attention of policy-makers toward personal change without structural change" (Ogbu, 1981, p. 13).

Although the attribution of methodological "narrowness" to microethnography and discourse analysis may have been justified at one time, this no longer seems to be the case. Theoretical advances in both multilevel analysis (Knorr-Cetina & Cicourel, 1981) and discourse analysis (Thompson, 1984) make a critical approach to communication, both at the level of social interaction and mass communication, not only plausible, but imperative. As Thompson, (1984) points out, a longstanding interest among discourse analysts is that of

> the relations between linguistic and <u>non-linguistic activity</u>. Traditionally such an interest was expressed in terms of the links between language and perception, language and thought, language and culture; but in recent years, discourse analysts have paid increasing attention to the ways in which language is used in specific social contexts and thereby serves as a medium of power and control. It is this increasingly sociological turn which has rendered discourse analysis relevant to, though by no means neatly integrated with,

> some of the principal tasks in the study of ideology. For if the language of everyday life is regarded as the very locus of ideology, then it is of the very utmost importance to examine the methods which have been elaborated for the analysis of ordinary discourse. (p. 99)

Critical educational theorists have appropriated many of the theoretical aspects of the work of such linguists as Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein. Categories like "cultural capital" and "sybolic violence" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) or "elaborated" and "restricted" codes (Bernstein, 1971) turn up frequently in critical educational discourse. Critical ethnographers in education, however, seem to underestimate in their own work the potential of sociolinguistic analysis to systematically explore how relations of domination are sustained through the mobilization of meaning.

The Study of Progressive Outliers and Collaborative Action Research.

One of the advantages of ethnographic case study research has been its ability to study outliers. In some research programs the outliers are of more interest to the researcher than the norm. Researchers interested in experimental approaches to instruction, for example, must seek out cases that would otherwise be lost in the aggregate. Likewise, critical ethnographers are beginning to seek out examples of practitioners who are attempting to put critical theory into practice (Comstock, 1982) This is seen most clearly in ethnographic

studies which attempt to understand how a teacher's feminist principles manifest themselves in the processes of classroom instruction (Dixon, 1989). Much of this type of research is done in collaboration with progressive educational practitioners.

Collaborative action research from a critical perspective owes much to Freire's (1970) work, in which the empowerment of the powerless and the eradication of their "culture of silence" becomes the goal. Such research openly eschews neutrality in its effort to achieve what Freire calls "conscientization" or knowledge about the world which brings self-affirmation. Again, most examples of such research come from critical feminists (Mies, 1983). This more activist research with its emphasis on the application of critical theory to practice and its effort at researcher/practitioner collaboration responds to recent criticisms from within critical research. For example, Aronowitz & Giroux (1985) decry the aloofness and negativism of critical researchers when they call for a "language of possibility" and an emphasis on "counter-hegemony". Likewise, Willis (1977), in his critical ethnography, Learning to Labor, devoted a chapter to what he called the educational practitioner's "Monday morning" problem. There is an increasing awareness among critical ethnographers that if educational critical ethnography shares with applied educational research the goal of social and educational change, then it must address its impact on educational practitioners. According to Willis there is an immobilizing tautology implicit in most critical research -

"nothing can be done until the basic structures of society are changed, but the structures prevent us making any changes." Erickson (1986) criticizes radical research that focuses entirely on structural inequality, pointing out that differences in student achievement between classrooms with similar socioeconomic backgrounds indicates that the teacher can make a difference in student achievement. Cazden (1983) makes a similar point when she states,

> Social change of all kinds - from nuclear disarmament and removal of toxic wastes from the environment to more effective education in individual schools - requires some combination of the technical and the political. Asserting the importance of one does not negate the necessity of the other (p. 39).

Unless critical ethnographers can provide an approach to educational and social change that includes both the technical and the political, - that is, both sound techniques within the school and an effective political program outside the school - even critical practitioners may succumb to either hopelessness or lowered expectations.

Wexler (1988) has criticized critical ethnographers for being like voyeurs, viewing their research subjects lives, with the detachment characteristic of television viewing. He also has criticized them for failing to reflect on critical ethnography as a socially situated practice. Critical ethnographers are, after all, part of a larger social system which rewards individual over collective accomplishment (e.g. the academic tenure process), and the commodification of knowledge. Although acts of resistence -

such as the formation of the Nebraska feminist research collective (1982) - among critical ethnographers are rare, the tendency toward collaborative action research and the negotiation of research outcomes with informants indicates a willingness among researchers to turn their critical faculties back upon themselves.

Conclusion.

Lather (1986a) divides critical research into three overlapping traditions: feminist research, neo-Marxist critical ethnography, and Freirian empowering research. I have combined these under the critical ethnography rubric to emphasize the commonalities in their research programs and to highlight those areas where they can learn from each other. The largely phallocentric, distancing tendencies of much neo-Marxist ethnography has increasingly adopted the merging, collaborative tendencies of feminist research. Likewise, critical feminists, drawing on neo-Marxist theory, are struggling with the ways patriarchy intersects with social class and race in women's oppression. Issues of equity and equality become inseperable in critical feminist research. Although critical feminism has its own tradition of empowerment which derives from the early integration of the personal with the political, critical pedagogists, if not critical ethnographers are exploring the

relevance of Freire's work to educational settings in the U.S. (Finlay & Faith, 1980; Flore & Elsasser, 1982)

Although there is a growing body of epistemological and methodological analysis in the writing on critical ethnography, there is as yet little practical advice. Critical ethnographers need to begin sharing insights from their research on such things as; how to write a reflective journal, how to negotiate outcomes with informants, how to gain and maintain site access when doing controversial research, and how to systematize reflexivity. I have tried to capture some of the tensions in this marriage of critical social theory and ethnographic methods. The future of the marriage will depend upon an ongoing dialogue between social analysis and the day-to-day experience of the critical ethnographer in the field

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